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ABSTRACT

The literature review describes the ideal of "a school for all" which integrates children with and without disabilities from a European perspective. Topics covered include a historical review of discrimination against the disabled, the establishment of private special schools, the increasing role of public educational authorities in providing special educational services in European nations, special problems of preschool education, the transition of young disabled people into open employment, referral, and various service delivery systems. Danish national statistics indicated that 13.1% of students received special education assistance in 1981-82, 2.4% of whom were in special classes. A full 81% of handicapped students received less than 5 hours weekly of special instruction. The paper stresses the importance of the attitudes of society, the need for proper training of regular class teachers, the availability of consultant support, placement in special classes for some children, and the need for special services such as psychological counseling and itinerant teachers. Seven tables of statistical data are appended. (DB)

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- A realistic approach to a school for all

by I. Skov-Jørgensen

Integration as a principle

Despite the differences in tradition and legislation, the issue associated with integration of disabled people, over decades, has occasioned professional and political discussions in national and international organizations.

It is generally agreed to integrate as far as this is possible and justified. This proviso, however, constitutes a number of requirements with respect to the school environments into which it is desired to integrate the disabled child. Integration ought rather be considered an instrument of normalization than a general objective of the disabled child's life.

A school for all

"A school for all" does not entail a common educational purpose and study plan - on the contrary. A condition that the disabled child may be educated within a school system which is open to all is that the system offers the possibility of individualized instruction, and takes the necessary consideration with respect to the personality and environment of each individual pupil.

Looking back

Schools for disabled children were originally established on private initiative. They were the outcome of humanitarian movements at the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th century. Until the 2nd World War, very often, it was the opinion that special education be segregated from ordinary education and be administered by other authorities than those reponsible for education in general.

An international breakthrough in the idea to solve the school problems related to disabled pupils in accordance with the general school legislation was effected during the 60es, a.o. resulting from the initiative of Rehabilitation International towards Unesco.

The battle against discrimination was strengthened during the years after the War, and the Commission for Special Education of Rehabilitation International found that the time had come for intensified action for equality of disabled people with respect to education. The targets were Unesco and WCOTP (International Organization of Teachers). On basis of joint research and exchange of experience, the members of the Commission exerted influence on authorities and organizations of interests, each in their respective country.

Education of disabled children had started as a segregation from a school system without any possibilities of helping them. The segregation resulted very often in treatment, care and tuition at the same boarding institution.

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As time passed, isolation in handicap environments - originally enforced - was idealized by the thesis that "equal children play best". Each group of handicapped had their own school system which prepared them to spend a life-time in small "model" communities, where society's offers for a right to a say and a choice of opportunities met with very unfavourable conditions.

Action

Attempts to break down this self-increasing development met with satisfaction by parents and legislators. The psyco-educational reports provided a solid basis for correlating instruction and training of disabled children with the general educational system.

This change in attitude will have to be compared with a growing understanding for any child's right to develop his or her personality through instruction arranged to meet the particular child's physical and mental conditions.

Pupils with special needs

All balance is difficult - also the balance between feer of categorization and the wish of accepting differences among people. Many and good reasons are in favour of softening the barriers between the different groups of handicapped. In professional and human regard it would, however, not be opportune to express oneself ambigously on concrete differences. The term "special needs" must necessarily be followed by a rational explanation of the prevailing difficulties, and in educational correlation, by an analysis of the strong points.

Studies in twelve European countries

My first reference is the study on special educational measures within the countries in the European Community which I conducted at the end of the 70es and beginning of the 80es, including investigations of measures related to preschool children.

Common objective

It appears that despite differences between the countries, importance is attached to transferring education of disabled pupils to those authorities who are responsible for education of the rest of the population, however in such a way that competence is concurrently improved by means of expertise.

The influence of the parents and the disabled child is normally a decisive factor in the collaboration between parents, school and expertise.

Private initiative

Private initiatives are still playing an important role. It is yet in the nature of the case that the increasing demands to staff and aids necessitate public financing. There should be no differences in the obligation among the school authorities to offer adequate education to all and a free choice of school. The solution is that, by a State or County Fund, all extra costs for recognized special education during compulsory school age are borne by the authorities. The obligation resting with the education authorities to implement special educational measures includes normally the age group from 0 to 18 years.

Priority of resources

Often, offers for optimal education make extra resources for special education essential. In a school for all, this may give rise to doubts whether general or special costs should be given priority. Extraordinarily high costs for instruction of a few pupils are not immediately acceptable to all administrators and teachers in the normal school. Consequently, the investigation suggests a political necessity to "earmark" grants for special educational measures and that special pedagogical experts should be given influence in the release of such grants.

Any technical aid being essential for the school work which will not be classified as a prosthesis should be given free of charge by the school. In those countries which are included by the investigation it is common practice that the social authorities, for example, put a wheelchair at the disposal of physically disabled pupils. It is then up to the school to arrange for transportation of this chair, or have a similar chair put at disposal during school hours.

Flexibility

There is hardly any country which has solved the problems concerning flexibility within or between the classes at a school for all. The interchange between individual considerations and fellowship is the vital nerve and daily challenge of the school. There is a marked trend toward increased cooperation across the class units.

As an example be mentioned a successful experiment where a special class with a maximum of 5 pupils was arranged alongside a normal class with 15 pupils, and with a co-teachers' arrangement for these two classes. - Joint responsibility is a general principle in a school for all.

General legislation

The extended compulsory education of disabled children is being replaced by uniform rules with additional offers for education in general of adults. In this connection, compensation is given for extra costs for aids for and transportation of disabled.

Preschool children

Many investigations confirm that early measures prevent schooling difficulties. There exists, however, a considerable risk of misjudgement as far as the personal development and ability of communication with preschool children is concerned. In Europe, there is a tradition that counsellors are very cautious in matters within the field of parental responsibility; cooperation regarding compensating aids and their application, though, is very concrete and neutral in regard to emotions.

Transition of young people into open employment

The OECD a.o. has been dealing with the transition of young disabled people from school into open employment. Other things being equal, growing up together with an ordinary group of people of the same age is a preparation for future employment, whereas guidance in this field is a specialized task linking the education and labour procurement sectors.

Training of teachers

With special education, the issue of teacher training for a long time was geared towards practise of skills in connection with employment at a school for handicapped. The consequences of the endeavours for integration will necessarily involve that, during basic teacher training, all student teachers receive thorough information on the handicapped and their instruction. In continuation of this training and after practical experience as teacher, further training for special teacher may be commenced.

Further training is to improve the general introduction of training for special teacher into the problems related to disabled children's learning disabilities; methods and aids, however, in half a dozen handicap fields are so comprehensive that any of them has to be integrated as a special module for at least half a year. Training for special teacher may for example include general introduction and exemplification to one or two fields. Training should be an interchange between theory and practice, and is very appropriate for interchange between study groups, correspondence courses, weekend education and practise. The students ought not doubt that this is a qualified training.

Trying to reach some conclusions

The investigation supports the use of the word "integrate" rather than "integration". This means that we deal more with a process than a static situation.

In cases where the school cannot teach the disabled child in an ordinary class, endeavours are made by the school to maintain educational or other social contact between the disabled child and an ordinary group of pupils of the same age. There still exists a need for observation schools and care centres with treatment in order to resolve topic problems.

To integrate is an active process only feasible if the school system is coherent and disposes partly of the full spectrum of special education facilities and partly of qualified counselling. All this in line with the general development of the education sector in the country concerned, yet under the obligation to give equal consideration to all groups of the population.

Resolutions

The report is part of the preparation of the EEC's decision that its general efforts on behalf of the disabled should be directed toward helping them in leading a normal, independent life, fully integrated into society.

In this context, a handicap is defined as any limitation, congenital or contracted, of a person's physical or mental abilities which affect his daily life.

Nordic report on a school for all

My second reference is a report on the results achieved by the Nordic countries of integrating pupils, receiving special instruction, into ordinary schools and classes. The report was issued by the Secretariat of Nordic Cultural Cooperation in 1984. It was prepared jointly by Inger Dahlgren and Henning W. Nielsen, together with the Heads of the Special Education Departments of the Ministry of Education as a guidance group. The 232 pages are in Scandinavian language.

As indicated by the title, "a school for all" is a common Nordic wish. Considerable differences are found in legislation in these countries, but the trend is to conform special education to the School Acts, governing education in general.

A decentralization is taking place in the school system with the objective to placing the decisions as close to the child's home as possible. This means increased parental influence on the school board concerned as well as on the choice of the child's school.

Examples of parental influence

According to Danish legislation, parents of pupils in special classes at a normal school elect 2 of the 7 members of the school board. This regulation brought about political considerations, but did not cause any problems in the schools. The regulation serves its purpose by ensuring a strong advocacy for the severely disabled in the school.

Coordination of various forms of service

The special schools, with their well-arranged number of pupils and comparatively homogeneous requirements, have been able to build up an interdisciplinary service which needs time for being transferred to a dissipation of pupils and problems which require a new organization and change in attitude. In return, you may find the medical and special educational counselling having a more varied form by way of the new structure.

Research

It was fortwith anticipated that a decentralization and dissipation of pupils might weaken the special educational research and dissimination of experience. This is not necessarily the case if funding is already available and the responsibility placed with a joint subordinate agency.

Yet it is correct that the need of centres with new technology and fundings for pilot projects are not foreseen in all events and that the lack of same may seem controversial to the new administrators.

General and advanced special education

It is very difficult, in every respect, to try to distinguish between general and advanced special education. Let us first try to define special education. In practise we might reserve the definition special education for that kind of education which necessitates special teacher training and compensating aids to an extent which requires special attendance and instruction. The daily contact with pupils who are entitled to special instruction in the ordinary class, should not tempt teachers to solve the general problems related to ordinary pupils by grants for special education. Such practice will go against the pupils as well as instruction in general.

Referral

Referral for special educational measures is made according to the national regulations on basis of an assessment by the school psychologist. If the school, the child's parents and the school psychologist do not agree, the decision is made by the school board, elected by the parents. It does very seldom happen that the decision is put before authorities on a higher level.

People generally recognize the principles that the least possible intervention be made and schooling arranged as close as possible to the child's normal school environment.

It is possible to choose between the following possibilities: Assistance in the class, supplementary instruction in one or several subjects together with others, or on an individual basis, or letting the pupil follow all lessons in one or several subjects at a special education centre, or in a special class. Short intensive courses are used more frequently, and with a good result.

National statistics

The statistics of the Ministry of Education concerning pupils receiving special education indicate that the number of pupils in special classes has been decreasing since 1973. Such classes are placed more and more often at ordinary schools.

Of the total number of pupils, 13,1% of them received some form of special educational assistance during 1981/82, 2,4% of whom attended instruction in special classes.

Of the total number of pupils receiving special education, 81% attended special instruction for less than 5 hours weekly, and less than 65% special education throughout the school year. At a specific time, 9% of all pupils in the school received special educational assistance. Comparable figures are found in the other Nordic countries.

The number of preschool children receiving special educational assistance amounts to abt. 3%. Great importance is attached to counselling of parents, to technical aids and to speech stimulation.

Conclusion

On basis of the investigation mentioned, and of a lifetime's international exchange of experience, I shall now try to answer the question: Where can we start, and where should we, based on actual knowledge, end our endeavours to make the school adequate for all?

The attitude of society

The primary task has a political character. Society's acceptance of the handicapped must be encouraged and entail consequences for legislation. Medias, organizations of interest, and the school play significant roles in influencing "society's attitude". Information is still needed. But let us direct our attention to the psychological barriers which may impede development if we, eager for reforms, provoke the non-disabled part of the population.

Suitability of school

Equally important as the attitude in society, is the suitability of school. It is imperative that all teachers knowsomething about handicaps and possibilities of helping. Brief instructions must be permanently kept up-to-date and distributed to all teachers.

When a disabled pupil is admitted to an ordinary class, it is necessary that the class teachers have received concrete information in advance, and in some cases, the opportunity of attending similar instruction by an experiencedcolleague.

Consultancy assistance

In order to limit "experiments with disabled pupils" all teachers must have the possibility to request consultancy assistance. Where pioneer work is started, it may be necessary to refrain from academic competance. Excellent teaching has often been brought about, based on engagement and independent studies. At the beginning stage, it is the point to get started. Much inspiration may be obtained from colleagues, for example by visiting a foreign country. Yet the school authorities should not hesitate to initiate further educational training but let the qualifications obtained be developed in keeping with the need of educational expertise, counselling, research and guidance. It would be realistic to calculate with 20 years for introducing educational reforms.

Education centres

There will always exist pupils who do not receive a meaningful schooling in an ordinary class, even despite the fact that the class teachers are fully capable of coping with the task. There should be a moderate concentration of such needed special classes. However, in regard to the educaitonal possibilities, interdisciplinary expertise, flexibility and economy, the education centres should be set up at ordinary schools. The proportion between the number of pupils in special and ordinary classes may be e.g. 1 against 4 with a maximized class quotient of 5 and 20 respectively.

Our experiments indicate that pupils with minor learning difficulties with language and motoric difficulties, psychic deficiency and perhaps deaf pupils are categories who will have an advantage of being placed together at their respective "host" school in a borough centrally situated and of adequate size to assume the administrative responsibility and to accomodate a technical service center, and to offer transportation facilities and a consultancy centre with a staff of itinerant teachers.

Experience made up till now motivates that the centre has a separate leader and budget, the headmasters of the "host" schools, though, may be assigned with an additional coordinating function, and the subordinate responsibility will of course have to be placed with the person in charge of the total school system. The education centre is an integrated part of the school system in the borough.

School psychological counselling

Special education and psyco-educational counselling are two aspects of the same question.

Counselling may be concentrated with a person with the best human and professional qualifications. The task is however so important to parents and handicapped, teachers and authorities, that the goal will be establishment of a school psychological service, comparable to a position as school psychologist and a position as general psychologist for each 3000 children of age 0-18 years and consultants in 6 or 8 handicap fields. The school psychologists and consultants are to maintain teaching a few lessons per week for professional as well as collegial reasons.

Itinerant teachers, including audio-logopaeds and preschool teachers with specail training constitute a significant link in the school psychological service, especially in relation to disabled preschool children receiving assistance at home or at day-care centres.

The national school psychological offices have furthermore at their disposal social advisors, and counsellors dealing with matters related to transition.

Medical experts as well as physiotherapists and occupational therapists are associated with the special education centres.

Reforms need time

An international status on the special educational services in the countries has a large range. This is how it should be. Special education is not to be segregated from but developed in keeping with the country's educational system on the whole, including the cultural and economic opportunities of the society concerned. These are the conditions for integration. Disabled people do not wish to have privileges, but equal rights, i.e. differentiated, individualized and qualified offers for education at a school for all.

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Litterature - I. Skov-Jørgensen (specially chosen)

- Special Education in Denmark (Copenhagen 1979)

- Special Education in the European Community
  (Brussels 1980, also available in French, German and Italian)

- Special Pre-School Education Facilities in the European Community
  (duplic. Brussels 1981)

- Special Education in the European Community - Supplement
  (duplic. Brussesl 1982)

- Special Education in Greece, Portugal and Spain
  (duplic. Brussels 1982)

- A School for All (Inger Dahlgren and Henning W. Nielsen
  (Copenhagen 1984)

- Educational Rehabilitation
  (Copenhagen 1986)

TABLE 1

Total number of preschool children who received special educational assistance, recorded in the age groups 0-6 years in the periods 1984/86 and 1985/86

Age	1984/85 % distribution of children referred to spec. educ. assistance	1985/86 % distribution of children referred to spec. educ. assistance
0-1	0,30	0,40
2	1,12	1,60
3	3,50	4,36
4	6,76	7,70
5	7,25	7,66
6	3,91	3,76
In total	3,46	3,76
According to § 19.2 *)	0,2	0,2

*) This paragraph concerns intensified special education

TABLE 2

Number of preschool children who received special educational assistance, referred according to handicap in the periods 1984/85 and 1985/86

	Speech impaired	Visual, hearing and motor handicapped	Specific learning difficulties	Maladjusted	Other difficulties	In total
1984/85						
% of all preschool children	2,70	0,21	0,18	0,19	0,18	3,46
% of boys of all children referred	67	62	63	70	62	66
1985/86						
% of all preschool children	2,90	0,23	0,20	0,21	0.20	3,76
% of boys of all children referred	66	58	60	69	56	65

TABLE 3

Primary measures of special educational assistance in the periods 1984/85 and 1985/86

	School psychol. examinations without special assistance	Special education at			Instruction/guidance at		Special educat. measures	In total
		Day institut./ 24 hour "	At home/ in private care	Special institut.	Day institut./ 24 hour "	At home/ in private care		
1984/85								
% of all preschool children	0,42	1,43	0,21	0,34	0,70	0,33	0,04	3,46
1985/86								
% of all preschool children	0,52	1,47	0,24	0,33	0,71	0,37	0,09	3,74

TABLE 4

Number of primary school pupils who received special education, in comparison with the total number of pupils

1981/82 *)	12,92 %
1984/85	12,61 %
1985/86	12,96 %

*) Including private schools

TABLE 5

Number of pupils who received special education, recorded in 1st to 11th form

Form	1981/82 % of pupils	1984/85 % of pupils	1985/86 % of pupils
Kinder-garden	7,1	5,87	6,02
1st Form	7,3	7,44	7,47
2nd Form	11,4	12,28	12,81
3rd Form	15,6	15,77	16,74
4th Form	17,5	17,47	17,81
5th Form	17,4	17,30	17,66
6th Form	17,5	16,69	17,31
7th Form	16,0	15,32	15,49
8th Form	12,0	10,47	11,24
9th Form	9,0	8,48	8,32
10th & 11th Form	10,4	6,72	6,70
In total	12,9	12,61	12,97
According to § 19.2 *)	0,81	0,85	0,85

*) This paragraph concerns intensified special education

TABLE 6

Number of pupils who received special education referred according to handicap in the periods 1984/85 and 1985/86

Reason for referral	1984/85		1985/86	
	% of all referred	% of all pupils	% of all referred	% of all pupils
Specific physical difficulties	13	2	13	2
Specific learning difficulties	61	8	60	8
General learning difficulties	15	2	15	2
Maladjusted	11	1	12	2
In total	100	13	100	14

TABLE 7

Number of pupils who received special education, registered according to primary measures in the periods 1984/85 and 1985/86

Year	Special education in connection with ordinary classes			Special education not integrated in ordinary classes				Observation school	In total	Other spec. educat. assistance
	In the class	Clinic/ classes	Private lessons	Spec. class at ordinary school	Special school: Primary borough	Special school: County borough	Private lessons			
1984/85										
% of all referred	16,05	56,73	12,30	8,38	1,74	3,48	0,53	0,79	100	
% of all pupils	2,02	7,15	1,55	1,06	0,22	0,44	0,07	0,10	12,61	0,56
1985/86										
% of all referred	15,35	57,33	12,46	8,55	1,68	3,28	0,55	0,80	100	
% of all pupils	1,99	7,44	1,62	1,11	0,22	0,43	0,07	0,10	12,97	0,65